

[By the Associated Press](#)

Forty House Republicans joined 60 Democrats Wednesday in pressing Congress' special debt reduction committee to consider all options, including higher revenues, and shoot for \$4 trillion in savings.

Their letter puts about one-sixth of House GOP lawmakers on record as saying the supercommittee should consider collecting more taxes to help shrink the enormous national debt, now at \$14.8 trillion. Most Republicans have strongly opposed raising revenues to address the problem.

"To succeed, all options for mandatory and discretionary spending and revenues must be on the table," according to the letter.

With a deadline three weeks away, the evenly divided, 12-member committee has shown few signs of progress. Democrats have demanded higher taxes as their price for accepting significant savings from benefit programs such as Medicare, but have been rebuffed by Republicans who oppose tax increases.

The letter also urges the committee to aim well beyond its official goal of finding at least \$1.2 trillion in savings over a decade.

"We know from other bipartisan frameworks that a target of some \$4 trillion in deficit reduction is necessary to stabilize our debt as a share of the economy and assure America's fiscal well-being," the letter says.

Bipartisan budget experts who have produced plans for reducing the debt have urged the committee to produce at least \$4 trillion in savings. They say doing less would not significantly alter the long-term financial nightmare the government faces, in which federal red ink continues growing at a faster rate than the U.S. economy.

The list of those who signed the letter shows many moderates from both parties. But it also ranges from conservatives such as presidential candidate Ron Paul, R-Texas, to liberals including Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, D-Mo., who heads the Congressional Black Caucus.

Others who signed include Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the No. 2 House Democratic leader and Rep. Paul Gosar, R-Ariz., one of this year's 87 House freshmen. Reps. Heath Shuler, D-N.C., and Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, organized the letter.

"We know that many in Washington and around the country do not believe we in the Congress and those within your committee can successfully meet this challenge. We believe that we can and we must," the letter says.

In an interview, Rep. Cynthia Lummis, R-Wyo., a signer who has had tea party support, said that while she would prefer to reduce the debt without raising taxes, "This is not an ideal world." She said the national debt is a problem created by Republicans and Democrats, and both parties must solve it. She said she is not "an absolute 'hell no' person when it comes to considering all options."

Like all but three of the 40 GOP signatories, Lummis has also signed the pledge by anti-tax activist Grover Norquist to oppose tax increases. Lummis said she did so when she was first elected in 2008, but did not sign it last year.

"Grover Norquist is not in my district," she said. "I represent the state of Wyoming and its people."

Norquist did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

There are 60 Democrats on the letter, showing that nearly one-third of House Democrats say they are willing to consider culling savings from benefit programs as part of a debt-cutting deal. Republicans have insisted that these huge and fast-growing programs, also called entitlements,

must be targeted heavily.

"Those of us who are the strongest supporters of entitlement programs have to be at the table to guarantee sustainability," Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., said in an interview. "If we stand on the sidelines, those programs will be in enormous jeopardy."

The committee faces a Nov. 23 deadline for proposing at least \$1.2 trillion in savings over 10 years. So far, it has made little apparent progress.

If Congress doesn't approve a plan by Dec. 23, \$1.2 trillion in automatic cuts would start taking effect in 2013.

"Our country needs our honest, bipartisan judgment and our political courage. Your committee has been given a unique opportunity and authority to act. We are prepared to support you in this effort," the letter concludes.